

Parting Ways, Part 2 - Acts 15:36-41 - June 8th, 2008

- This passage has so much packed in to just a few short verses, which is why we're taking two weeks to study it. There's much to learn.
- I've taken a little different approach with this text in that I'm not going to teach or preach a typical three or four point sermon.
- Luke, by the Holy Spirit, tells us how Paul and Barnabas get into such a sharp dispute over John Mark that they end up parting ways.

- Here's how Luke records what happened between Paul and Barnabas when they had this intense argument:
v36 Some time had passed since the Jerusalem conference and Paul proposed to Barnabas that they go on another missionary trip.
v37-38 Barnabas wants to take John Mark with them, but Paul objects because he had deserted them in Paymphyia, (Acts 13:13).
v39 They had such an intense and heated argument that they end up parting ways and Barnabas takes Mark and goes to Cyprus.
v40-41 Paul chooses Silas and leaves, and is sent off to Syria and Cilicia with the blessing and being commended to the Lord

- I suppose that you could say that this is a teaching not only about man parting ways, but it's also about God giving second chances.
- Lord willing, as we finish our study today, we'll find much hope and much encouragement as we see how God works this for the good.
- We've sort of been tackling the text by seeking answers to some questions that the passage seems to ask, if you will.

Question #1: Who's right and whose wrong, Paul or Barnabas? Both were both.

- It is interesting, however, that only Paul and Silas go out with the recorded blessing of the church in Antioch.
- Also, the Holy Spirit sees fit, for the remainder of the book of Acts, to follow Paul and Silas and not Barnabas and John Mark.

- In all fairness to Barnabas, he will take John Mark under his wing and he will become a godly leader in the early church.
- John Mark will become a tremendous help to Peter, and by the Holy Spirit will write the gospel bearing his name.
- I believe that the encouraging ministry of Barnabas and the bold ministry of Paul both had an impact on John Mark, even Peter, as well.

Question #2: Why did John Mark desert them in Pamphylia?

- We can only speculate since Luke doesn't tell us why, but it's believed that he had become disenchanted, or overwhelmed or both.

Question #3: How does this all end up?

- God works everything out for the good.

- Though they never minister together again, it is interesting that Paul would write fondly about Barnabas in his letter the Corinthians.
- Then, to the Colossian church, he writes lovingly about John Mark.

Colossians 4:10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) NIV

- To Philemon he describes Mark as his fellow laborer.

Philemon 23-24 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. 24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers. NIV

- In prison awaiting a martyr's death he writes to Timothy and asks them to bring Mark because he's useful in ministry.

2 Timothy 4:7-11 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. 9 Do your best to come to me quickly, 10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. NIV

Question #4: What we can learn from the text?

1. Parting ways can actually be a good thing in that God can work out irreconcilable differences for the good.
- Now there were two missionary teams that went out instead of just one.

"This separation, though painful in its cause, was a most excellent thing. There was no need for two-such men to be together, they were each able to lead the way alone, and by their doing so double good was accomplished."

Charles Spurgeon

"But this example of God's providence may not be used as an excuse for Christian quarreling."

Stott

2. God is the God of second and even endless chances for the John Mark's in life who have failed and been defeated in the past.
- Napoleon was asked what kind of division commanders he had. He said he didn't know because they had never been defeated.
- I suggest to you that sometimes man's failure and defeat are the catalyst for God's victory and triumph. We see that with Jesus Himself.

"God called Jesus Christ to what seemed unmitigated disaster. Jesus Christ called His disciples to see Him put to death; He led every one of them to the place where their hearts were broken. Jesus Christ's life was an absolute failure from every standpoint but God's. But what seemed failure from man's standpoint was a tremendous triumph from God's, because God's purpose is never man's purpose."

Oswald Chambers, "My Utmost for His Highest" (August 5th) "The Baffling Call of God" The Complete Works of Oswald Chambers p.808-809

One commentator put it this way: “God can take a man who has failed repeatedly, and still make him fulfill His perfect plan - not God’s second best, but God’s best plan. This is because even the failure may have been part of God’s perfect plan to teach him a few unforgettable lessons. This is impossible for human logic to grasp, because we know God so very little. It is only broken men and women whom God can use. And one way He breaks us is through repeated failures. One of the biggest problems that God has with us is to bless us in such a way that the blessing does not puff us up with pride. To get victory over anger and then to be proud of it, is to fall into a far deeper pit than the one we were in! God has to keep us humble in victory. This is where repeated failures have a part to play in destroying our self-confidence so that we are convinced that victory ... is not possible apart from Him.”

“Why does God show us the failures of these great leaders? Could it be that He wants us to know that in spite of our fiascos, He can still make something glorious out of our lives? ... I consider Jacob’s biography one of the most interesting of them all. Here is why: Numerous times throughout the Bible, God reminds His people that He is “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:15). In fact, in this same verse, God says, “This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.” Toward the end of his journey God changed Jacob’s name, which means “deceiver,” to Israel meaning “Prince of God.” So, why doesn’t He say, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and ...Israel”? How strange! How come He associates His name with a cheat who wasted two decades trying to do things his own way? ...God wants to say to you and me, “ I am still the God who makes failures into Princes of God. I remain the God who takes broken lives – people with multiple divorces, sick in body because of sin, in prison for decades, labeled as losers, crazy folk nobody wants, outcasts with no hope --- and turns them into something beautiful.”

K.P. Yohannan, “It’s a New Day, God’s Answer to Our Failures.” p10

- The failure in the beginning with Adam and Eve fulfilled God’s purpose in the plan of redemption by sending the second Adam, Jesus.
- Sprinkled throughout the scriptures from front to finish is one true story after another of how God was able to miraculously do this.
- God is able to fulfill His purpose and His perfect plan despite mans failures. Again, it’s not how bad we’ve been; it’s how good He is!